

# Whitley Bay's iconic Spanish City secures future

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Interior of Spanish City and Dome, Whitley Bay

When it was built in 1910, its dome was the largest freestanding dome in the UK after St Paul's Cathedral. A quintessential Edwardian seaside resort, at its height Spanish City and Whitley Bay Pleasure Gardens attracted tens of thousands of visitors from across the UK. Following a period of decline during the 1980s and 1990s, the building closed permanently to the public in 2000.

News of this vital investment is the culmination of a number of years of work by the council and the local community to secure the future of building. The money will now unlock the building's commercial potential, funding the vital repairs needed to return the building to a good state of repair, which to date has been a barrier to regeneration. The dome building will undergo major refurbishment for leisure, retail and business enterprise use.

Today's announcement has delighted North Tyneside elected mayor, Norma Redfearn who says she is "absolutely over the moon" that the Spanish City and its iconic dome will be brought back to life. "This is such fantastic news, not just for Whitley Bay but for the borough and the region as a whole. We want the Spanish City Dome site to once again be the symbol of a successful seaside, restoring pride in the area and attracting more visitors and investment.

"The Spanish City is an incredibly special place, held dearly in people's affections. This has been clearly demonstrated by the overwhelming support we have received from local people, with hundreds of all ages streaming through the doors when we held open events at the Dome. Securing the future of Spanish City has been a real community effort which confirmed my view that people are really passionate about it. They see it as part of our heritage, our identity and, like me, they want to end years of neglect and stagnation and breathe life back into this wonderful historic building."

Ivor Crowther, Head of HLF North East, said: "This iconic building holds an incredibly special place in the hearts of all of us who live in the North East and beyond. Whilst much-loved, buildings like these present huge financial challenges. This HLF grant will now unlock the potential of Spanish City, encourage private investment, be a catalyst for wider regeneration and in turn create a huge boost to the local economy"

This grant was awarded through HLF's new Heritage Enterprise programme which launched in April 2013. It addresses 'market failure' – where buildings have previously failed to attract investment or realise their commercial potential because the cost of repair has meant that they were not commercially viable. This Lottery investment is now bridging that financial gap, enabling vital repairs and conservation works to transform Spanish City into safe, usable and inspirational space.

Now that this grant is approved a much more detailed stage two bid process will begin early in the New Year and further consultation events will be arranged.

### **Notes to editors**

Heritage Enterprise applications are assessed in two rounds. This award is a first-round pass, meaning that HLF has endorsed outline proposals and earmarked funding. This grant includes an immediate award of £182,700 to fund the development of the project. Detailed proposals will then be considered by HLF at second-round and as long as plans have progressed satisfactorily and according to the original proposal, an award for the project is confirmed. View other [recent Heritage Enterprise projects](#) or join in the conversation at [#HeritageEnterprise](#).

### **Further information**

North Tyneside Council: Aileen Brewis on 0191 643 5081, email: [aileen.brewis@northtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:aileen.brewis@northtyneside.gov.uk).

HLF Press Office: Natasha Hughes on 020 7591 6143 / 6032, out of hours mobile: 07973 613 820.